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THE DISAPPEARANCE
OF WILD LIFE

By H. P. ATTWATER, Houston, Texas

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THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WILD LIFE.

By H. P. Attwater, Houston, Texas.

The first settlers in America found the land abounding with wild life, including numerous important and valuable species of game birds and animals, which were found in immense flocks and herds in many localities. During the bird migration periods and nesting seasons in those days, the whole country was filled with a great, glad, grand chorus of nature's orchestra, in marked contrast with the silence which prevails in the forests and groves at the present day, and throughout the great cultivated farm, field, orchard and garden areas of this country, now swarming with insect pests, which destroy crops, pester livestock and spread diseases among men and animals, thereby causing immense losses to our agricultural, horticultural and livestock industries.

One of the most important features connected with the conservation of our natural resources is the preservation of valuable animal and plant life, and their protection against the cruelty, the ignorance and the selfishness of their destroyers. Reports by reliable investigators show that air and water are polluted, rivers and bayous used as sewers and dumping grounds, forests swept away, fish destroyed in the streams, that some of the most useful species of our wild birds and animals have been exterminated, and others of great economic value, in great danger of becoming extinct. It is a most deplorable fact, agreed to by most naturalists in the United States, that at least 90 per cent of the wild life of this country, has been destroyed in the past 30 years. This is not being done by savages and ignorant persons, but by intelligent people who boast of their civilization and education. In speaking of the senseless destruction of birds and animals Dr. W. T. Hornaday, director of the New York Zoological Park, and well known as a champion of wild life preservation, says:

"There are probably millions of people who do not realize that civilized man is the most persistently wicked and wasteful of all the predatory animals. The lions, the tigers, the bears, the eagles and hawks, serpents and fish eating fishes, all live by destroying life; but they kill only what they think they can consume. From the earliest historic times, it has been the way of savage man, red, black, brown and yellow, to kill as wild animals do—only what he can use or thinks he can * * * * * It has remained for the wolf, the sheep-killing dog and civilized man to

make records for reckless and wanton slaughter, which put them in a class together and quite apart from predatory animals."

In the open mountain and vast plain regions in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world, big game is now being killed much faster than it breeds and the fate of the American Buffalo awaits the elephant, the giraffe, the zebra, the hippopotamus, the rhinoceros, and other noble big game animals, which formerly roamed those regions in countless numbers. Commercialism has transformed an earthly paradise into modern communities, where the beauty of nature and the value of her wild creatures has been lost sight of during the rush of business, the mad race for dollars, and the demands of fashion and society. The natural haunts and nesting places of many species of birds have been destroyed, as well as the birds themselves, and the result is that the "balance of nature" (that is, each species acting as a check upon others) has been interfered with, and we are confronted with the serious problem of an unnatural increase of injurious insects, vermin and disease.

The pollution of streams and bayous has resulted in great mortality among wild ducks and other waterfowl in some states. In 1912 nearly 45,000 dead ducks were picked up on one marsh in Utah and it is stated that thousands of wild ducks and other aquatic birds meet their death by alighting at night in the oil covered lakes and tanks of Mexico, which they mistake for fresh water.

The use of the plumage of wild birds for millinery purposes has been one of the chief causes of the destruction of bird life, and many of the most beautiful and curious birds, in different parts of the world have been slaughtered to meet the demands of the feather trade. Millions of useful birds have been sacrificed on the altar of fashion and their feathers used to decorate the heads and hats of the fair women of Europe and America. Until quite recently those who desired to see a stop put to the plumage traffic and who advocated the protection of non-game birds, were generally regarded as sentimental, silly minded people, and in legislative halls and other places they were accused of interfering with "practical business." It was "practical business" that almost exterminated the American Buffalo for their hides leaving their carcasses to rot on the plains. It was "practical business" that slaughtered the passenger pigeons by the millions and fed their bodies to the hogs. It was "practical business" that tore the wings off millions of terns and sea gulls for the millinery trade, the plumes from millions of herons and egrets, and the breasts from thousands of grebes in their nesting seasons, leaving

the young birds to perish in the nests. It is "practical business" that is destroying our forests, polluting our streams, destroying our fish, and exterminating our noble wild animals and game birds.

One great cause of bird destruction is the thousands of ignorant men, boys and idle negroes, who, in spite of our bird and game protection laws, roam the country continually, with cheap shot guns, target rifles and air guns, shooting little sandpipers, swallows, martins, nighthawks, field-larks, blackbirds, woodpeckers, robins, doves and other useful birds, at any and all times of the year for "sport" or for food. These "sandpiper sportsmen" as Dr. Hornaday calls them, often encouraged and emboldened by neighborly tolerance for law-breaking bird-killers, and sympathetic judges and juries, are without sense or reason ruthlessly destroying millions of valuable insect eating birds, which are the farmers best friends.

Another cause of great bird destruction is the half-bred, half-trained bird dog, which roams over the country unrestrained by his irresponsible owner, disturbing the ground birds during their breeding season, and destroying many nests, eggs and young birds.

Sooner or later the American people will realize the fact that the destruction of useful birds is a grave emergency that seriously affects the cost of living. Government investigations show that an immense number of birds of great economic value are being destroyed annually and that some of the most useful species are becoming very scarce. Whole forests are dying, and shade trees are in danger, because the woodpeckers have been killed off, and now the tree doctors are trying to take the woodpecker's place and attend to his duties, at so much per tree. Boll weevils and a thousand other insect pests are damaging our crops to the extent of millions of dollars annually, and mosquitoes, flies and vermin are spreading disease in all directions. Thousands of dollars are being expended in expensive spraying machinery and other devices for destroying scale insects, ticks, plant lice, caterpillars, grubs, cut-worms, etc., and we are trying to do the work with sprayers that nature intended the birds to do.

Scientists assert that man could not exist on the earth, without the protection given him by birds, that insects are the greatest peril to mankind, and the birds the most indispensable balancing force of nature. How many members of our State Legislature who have introduced or voted for bills and amendments to remove restrictions from the killing of wild birds, are there who

realize that all life is interdependent, or understand anything about the relations of mankind with other forms of life?

The valuable bulletins issued by the U. S. Biological Survey, have been the means of removing and correcting many wrong impressions and false ideas in regard to the habits of some of the most despised creatures. In one of the bulletins issued, on the Economic Value of the North American Skunks, it is stated that:

“Skunks are among the most useful of the native animals, and are one of the most efficient helps to the farmer and orchardist in their warfare against insect and rodent pests.”

Other important bulletins giving the results of investigations by competent naturalists, furnish reliable evidence regarding the habits of toads, bats, moles, eagles, hawks, owls and numerous other common wild birds and animals, which prove most conclusively that some species which have hitherto been considered enemies, are really friends of the farmer and fruit grower, and that the good they do far exceeds the harm. Out of fifty species of hawks in the United States, only four or five of them may be considered injurious.

Recent investigations show that the buzzard, a much persecuted bird, accused of spreading anthrax among cattle, and doomed to extermination on account of this prejudice, is probably one of the least active of the agencies by which this disease is disseminated. It is no doubt a fact that hogs, dogs, wolves, cats, possums, etc., with flies and other insects are all greater distributors of the germs from decaying carcasses than the buzzards. Why should the buzzard, a valuable scavenger bird, bear the blame alone? Dr. A. K. Fisher, in charge of Economic Investigations of the U. S. Biological Survey, while he does not deny that buzzards may carry disease, stated that he would value highly any data, which will positively prove that they transmit disease either to human beings or livestock, and suggests that legislatures devote their time to passing laws for the destruction of all diseased carcasses, and not for the persecution of the buzzard.

The following paragraphs on this subject are from a bulletin (No. 755) issued in October this year (1916) by the United States Department of Agriculture, which should be read by every farmer and stockman:

“The nature of their food would indicate that buzzards have strong digestive powers. The spores of anthrax or charbon, a virulent stock disease, have been shown by two independent investigations to be destroyed by passing through the alimentary canal of buzzards. Anthrax

spores are not destroyed in the digestive tracts of other carrion-feeding animals, as the dog, cat, hog, chicken or possum."

"It is true that buzzards may carry the germs of anthrax or other stock disease on their plumage, feet or bills, and thus distribute them; but all the other animals just mentioned may similarly carry disease germs on the surface of their bodies, as may also flies, domestic pigeons and other poultry, horses, mules and cattle, not to mention members of the human family. In fact at the same time that steps are being taken greatly to reduce or exterminate a wild bird—(the buzzard)—which may possibly play a minor part in the transmission of anthrax, farmers are harboring several domestic animals which have far greater possibilities as spreaders of the disease. The fact that anthrax may be carried by flies is more than sufficient to explain the most severe epidemics."

"The charge that the buzzard spreads hog cholera has never been demonstrated, and until this is done judgment should be suspended."

Pelicans, gulls and other sea-birds which inhabit the gulf coast region of Texas, are now threatened with extermination by having the protection of the law removed from them, the crime of which they are accused being the loss to the fishing industry of this State on account of the destruction of fish by these birds. The pelican is one of the predaceous birds which feeds largely on fish, but it is also a fact that a large portion of the fish they catch are NOT edible, and that some of them are far more destructive to the fish and oyster industries, than the pelicans themselves. Numerous sharks, tarpon, porpoises and other sea monsters which frequent the passes, with gars, turtles and other very destructive creatures which abound in the bays and shallow waters, are continually preying upon and destroying great quantities of food fishes and their spawn. Why not place a bounty on them? Pelicans do not live entirely on fish. They catch and consume great quantities of harmful aquatic creatures, which are injurious to the fishing industry, by destroying eggs, spawn and millions of minnows and tiny fishes. Why not give them credit for this? Not one person in a hundred who is in favor of "giving the devil his due" is in favor of extending the same courtesy to the pelicans and other sea birds, for any good they do.

Mr. W. L. McAtee, of the United States Biological Survey, says:

"There is no denying that pelicans consume a certain number of food fishes, but even if the birds consumed indiscriminately all kinds of fishes that came their way, they would not be highly destructive to FOOD fishes, since these fishes themselves are much in the minority among fish in general."

Congressman Jeff McLemore, Editor of State Topics, who resided on the coast for many years, in a recent article on this subject, said:

"We do not agree with those who say that these birds should be killed off. The pelicans are the great scavengers of the bays. In the old days, when there were packing houses all along the coast and cattle were killed for their hides and tallow, the bays were covered with pelicans and comorants; while gulls, terns, and shearwaters were in the air by the millions. In those days the bays were literally filled with fish, oysters, shrimp, etc., and these birds were just as predaceous then as now. It is not predaceous birds but predaceous MEN that need attending to."

The Corpus Christi Caller says:

"There is no gainsaying the fact that pelicans and other predaceous water fowl are very destructive to fish, but with male man kept from closed waters, we have a sneaking idea that nature will very nearly balance matters, and preserve the fish supply. Man and fire-arms and nets and snares have disturbed nature's balance, but with proper safeguards properly applied, there is no reason why both fish and birds cannot be preserved to posterity."

In 1913 a joint Legislative Committee of the House and Senate made a tour of inspection and investigation of the State's marine interests. Dr. W. B. Goodner, chairman of the committee is quoted as follows:

"Strenuous measures are demanded for the fish and oyster industry. We have taken testimony on this investigation which showed often as many as five 1200 foot seines have been stretched together and dragged from the sterns of two boats, across the shallow bays, sweeping more than one solid mile of water and taking everything before it. The testimony of fishermen is to the effect that the seaweed gathers in the meshes of these seines in such quantities that even the smallest fish are dragged along and killed. They say almost every fish is killed as this line of seines sweeps across the shallow waters."

I venture to assert that in one day of this kind of fishing more fish are destroyed than by all the pelicans put together.

Hon T. S. Ross, another member of the committee, said:

"Our information has been that many tons of fish have been pulled ashore in years past and the most of them left on the beach. Strictest laws should be enacted to protect the fish and oysters at large against waste. Foreign labor has crept into our waters which has nothing at heart for our State-cares nothing for our laws, and consequently gets fish and oysters anywhere they can be taken with the least trouble, though some waters are forbidden by law to fish in. The fact is they have driven American labor from the waters."

After duly considering these conditions, it is the opinion of many of our best citizens, that undesirable people do more injury to our fishing industries than undesirable birds, and those authorities who have studied the habits of aquatic birds, and who know a great deal more about their economic value than I do, state most emphatically that it will not be necessary for any

state to kill off the gulls, pelicans and other sea-birds for the sake of protecting the fishing industry.

In regard to the gulls, the United States Department of Agriculture has recently issued an appeal for their protection and states that sea-gulls perform important work as scavengers, preferring as food, dead fish, garbage and offal of various sorts that collect along the coast, and that the gulls which frequent the inland waters at certain seasons of the year, render equally important services, their food being found to be almost exclusively insectivorous. In the spring and summer months, hundreds of gulls which wintered in the South follow the plowmen in Wisconsin, the Dakotas and other States, destroying immense quantities of insects and their larvae uncovered by the plow.

In 1907-1908 during a serious outbreak of field mice in Nevada hundreds of gulls (which are extremely fond of small rodents) appeared and very materially aided the farmers in their efforts to get rid of the mice.

In 1848-1849 and 1850 millions of crickets swept over the fields of Utah and threatened to bring famine to the settlers there. Then along came large flocks of gulls which stayed and feasted on the crickets until they were entirely destroyed. The grateful citizens called it a miracle and in recognition of the services of these gulls erected a monument which stands in Salt Lake City today, surmounted by bronze figures of two gulls, to serve as a constant reminder of the substantial debt the people owe to these birds.

As regards removing protection from buzzards, pelicans, gulls, eagles, doves and other birds which are accused of committing depredations, justice, commonsense and fair play demand that before they are placed on the black list and their slaughter legalized and commenced, the case of these poor dumb creatures should at least receive careful consideration; and before condemning them, it will be well to remember that there is no recovery for an extinct species. We can replant the forests, conserve the minerals, restock the streams with fish, reclaim the swamps and deserts, but a bird or animal once gone, is gone forever.

It will also be well to remember that in several States and foreign countries where false impressions have prevailed and birds have been legally destroyed through ignorance, disastrous to agriculture have followed.

During the French revolution and in other times and countries when the scarcity of food was a serious problem, the population

killed off the birds in great numbers, but the effect on the orchards, vineyards and farm crops was so painfully noticeable that laws were immediately enacted for the protection of the birds.

At the last session of the Texas Legislature a bill was passed extending for two months the open season in which doves may be killed in this State. The main reason advanced why this change ought to be made, was that as doves began to move southward in the early fall, the sportsmen of North Texas, were deprived of the sport of killing these useful birds, and that the South Texas gunners got the best of the dove shooting. Because many farmers and others were opposed to changing the open season for doves to suit the convenience of some sportsmen, they were criticised and ridiculed, their motives impugned, their statements misquoted and misrepresented and themselves contemptuously referred to as "silly sentimentalists," "extremists," "hay-seeds," "bird-crankers," etc., by many of those who proposed and advocated the amendment.

For the purpose of securing public sentiment for their side of the question all kinds of unjust charges were trumped up against the doves. The investigations of the U. S. Biological Survey prove that doves consume great quantities of injurious weed seeds.

The claim that doves destroy wheat and oat crops, is too poor an excuse for any real sportsman to offer for advocating the slaughter of these birds, especially in many parts of the State where grain crops are not raised. The evidence of responsible farmers and impartial investigators show that the damage has been greatly exaggerated, chiefly for the benefit of a certain class of hunters, who desire an excuse of some kind for shooting birds in the summer months. Other birds equally as guilty of consuming shattered and wasted grain, are not accused for the reason that they are unsuitable for pot-pie purposes. The Texas law is very reasonable in regard to birds which commit depredations and allows farmers to kill those which are injuring or destroying their crops. Farmers in some countries value the services of the birds so highly that they pay men and boys to scare them away from the fields when the crops are ripening.

The doves were accused by one writer of spreading Johnson grass. This matter was referred to scientists of the U. S. Biological Survey and the Rice Institute for their opinions, with the result that the highest authorities of these institutions are emphatic in their statements that doves can never become potent disseminators of Johnson grass and similar pests.

Mr. Walter B. Barrow, scientific ornithologist of the U. S. Biological Survey in an article on "Seed Planting by Birds" in the Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture 1890, says:

"Seeds eaten by seed eating birds, are eaten for the kernel or embryo which they contain, and the grinding and digestion of this necessarily destroys the seed. Many fruits and so-called berries on the other hand, are eaten solely for the nourishing matter surrounding or attached to the seeds, and in most cases the seed escapes destruction and is dropped either by ejection or rejection at a distance from the parent plant. In other words, seeds which simply contain nourishment are eaten and destroyed, while seeds which are contained in nourishment are eaten and survive."

Other writers consider doves of no use or value and not entitled to protection at any time. In their opinion it would not matter if they went the way the wild pigeon went. Others claim that they are so numerous, that they are in no danger of every becoming extinct. The same argument was used fifty years ago in regard to the wild pigeons. It is said that the best way of judging the future is by the past. In this connection I desire to call particular attention to the following report of a select committee of the Senate of Ohio in 1857, on a bill proposed to protect the passenger pigeon:

"The passenger pigeon needs no protection. Wonderfully prolific, having the vast forests of the North as its breeding grounds, traveling hundreds of miles in search of food, it is here today and elsewhere tomorrow, and no ordinary destruction can lessen them or cause them to be missed from the myriads that are yearly produced."

The last passenger pigeon died at the Zoological Garden in Cincinnati, Ohio, on September 1st, 1914, the last of a race of countless millions, and with it a beautiful and economically valuable bird vanished forever from the face of the earth.

Many of the best sportsmen who are in favor of reasonable protection, with a view of preserving this valuable little game bird and preventing its extermination, are not in favor of commencing dove shooting in September, for the reason that doves are not through with their nesting season at that time of the year. In some parts of this State doves nest all through July and August, their eggs are frequently found in September and occasionally as late as the middle of October.

As already stated the new dove law went into effect in the fall of last year (1915) and numerous newspaper reports from all over the State, with information from other sources, show that besides sportsmen, a great host of irresponsible men and careless boys, started out on September 1st to kill doves. Hunting parties

in automobiles went out daily along the highways and byways all over Texas, and around the streams, tanks and water holes, doves coming for water were killed by the thousands, and in many instances the young doves were left to perish in the nests. Although September and October are closed months for quail and other game birds, it is a well known fact that the majority of the dove hunters in those months, killed anything and everything they came across with feathers or fur, and paid little attention to bag limits. This may suit some of the "practical sportsmen" and no doubt furnished fun for a lot of irresponsible people, but it can hardly be called "sport." In this connection I desire to call particular attention to the following extract from a letter to the newspapers in February last from Mr. W. Goodrich Jones of Temple, President of the Texas Fish & Game Protective Association, the well known champion of wild life in Texas, who is well posted in regard to the situation:

"Texas has a longer hunting season than any other State in the Union. In other States the limit runs from 30 to 60 days, while here the shooting begins on September 1st and continues until February 1st. Five months, think of it. No breed of birds or animals can stand such ceaseless bombardment. True, the law says that from September 1st to December 1st the hunter shall kill only doves, while from December 1st until February 1st quail are in season. It would be just as sensible to turn a whole school of children into a candy store, letting out the proprietor and clerks, and tell the children that they could eat only peppermints from 4 till 5 o'clock and chocolates from 5 to 6 o'clock."

Among sports and pastimes, hunting, shooting and fishing are considered the world over, as being most desirable and suitable forms of recreation, and for centuries past have provided healthy exercise, pleasure and profit for all classes of people. The real sportsman who believes in legitimate hunting within reasonable limits, and who, for success, depends upon his own skill, courage and endurance, is invariably a true gentleman in every sense of the word. Included in this class are some of the greatest and best men who have ever lived, and among them are those to whom the world will everlastingly owe debts of gratitude for valuable services rendered to humanity. Most of the world's famous scientists, explorers, missionaries, statesmen, educators and other prominent men, were renowned in their day as fearless hunters, keen sportsmen or expert anglers. The true sportsman is possessed of a natural love or inclination for hunting, shooting and fishing, and he is not influenced by selfish interests, mercenary motives, personal gain or commercial considerations. The best class of sportsmen are always in favor of game protection and the enforcement of reasonable game laws. They cheerfully comply with the hunting regulations themselves, and realize

that it is impossible to frame laws that will suit all parties and all sections. Above and beyond all the real sportsman is in favor of giving the wild birds, some kind of a fair show and a square deal, for he well knows that they are at a great disadvantage not only in the field, but also on account of not being represented when bird and game laws are being considered, or when bag limits and open and closed seasons are being discussed. The success or failure of our game protection laws depends largely on the kind of men behind the guns. Law or no law, the right-minded sportsmen, old and young, do not need restrictive legislation to control their actions, or regulate their hunting and fishing methods, and there would be no need of game wardens, if the majority of so-called "sportsmen" were earnestly and honestly in favor of game and fish protection and preservation. Mr. Hornaday says:

"It is now a thoroughly established principle in every State that the wild game is public property, and belongs to the people, and not wholly and exclusively to the sportsmen and hunters. Posterity has claims which no real sportsman can ignore, and he has no moral or legal right to exterminate a valuable wild species of living things, thereby depriving the generations that will come after us, of their usefulness and the pleasure they afford."

During recent years wild game has been at a great disadvantage and birds are getting less and less chance to escape the hunters. In some instances game laws have been changed and amendments adopted to facilitate killing, and in favor of the hunters instead of the hunted. Makers of fire-arms and ammunition have taxed their ingenuity to make killing easier, especially for the amateur sportsman. Over one hundred thousand automatic and pump guns are made and sold every year. The use of automobiles and motor boats by sportsmen and hunters, is of the greatest assistance in aiding them to take still greater advantage of the game. It is a deplorable fact, that in the name of sport, game and other valuable wild life is now being exterminated by machinery and motor power, according to law, although the officials of some of the principal gun clubs in the United States, do not approve of these methods or the use of bird killing machinery. They are also in favor of abolishing market hunting altogether, and many of them have cut out spring shooting.

The game birds and animals of Texas are among the most valuable assets of this State. For many years past Texas has been advertised as "The Sportsmen's Paradise" and this has been the means of attracting hundreds of visiting capitalists, investors and new settlers. Evidently our legislators have not fully realized

the great importance of game protection and the necessity for the preservation of useful wild birds and animals. At the sessions of the legislature when game laws have been introduced the majority of the members usually treat the subject with more or less indifference, and on account of being much more interested in other measures, they seldom have time or inclination to seriously and carefully consider the fish and game situation. They do not always understand the actual facts and conditions, and being frequently misinformed the result is that much needed amendments are sidetracked or indefinitely postponed. Occasionally at the close of a session, during the turmoil and excitement, a few members who are interested because they hunt and fish themselves or at the persistent solicitation and request of other interested parties, will seize an opportunity and manage to rush through some amendment, which the majority votes for (some of them very reluctantly) to save time and because they find it expedient to do so.

In spite of the efforts of the State Fish and Game Commissioner and some of his deputy wardens to enforce the present fish, game and bird law, it is admitted to be a failure by most citizens, including a large number of sportsmen themselves. It seems to be the general opinion that only a few conscientious hunters really comply with the law.

With these circumstances confronting us, the question naturally arises, what ought to be done to stop this senseless and reckless destruction of wild life in Texas? One of the first moves should be the passage of a law at the next session of our legislature requiring every hunter (young or old) to take out a license. This would prevent to a very large extent the wanton slaughter of both game and non-game birds by the hosts of "sandpiper sportsmen," "pot-hunters," young school boys and other irregular hunters, white and colored, to whose tender mercies the birds are left. It would also provide a fund which could be used to good advantage by the State Fish and Game Commisioner and which would help to solve one of the perplexing finanical problems connected with the work of his office. A reasonable hunter's license has not only proved a decided success wherever tried, but the good results are so manifest, that the great majority of farmers are strongly in favor of it, and few sportsmen are to be found now who do not favor it.

There should be a closed season on prairie chicken and antelope for a number of years to come.

No wild turkeys should be killed in February and March and

shooting at or killing wild trukey on their roosts at any time should be prohibited.

As before stated, the common dove is one of the most valuable game birds in Texas, and should be given the same protection as the quail.

The present daily bag limits should be reduced.

The English sparrow is a nuisance, and steps should immediately be taken to exterminate these pests before they become a plague.

Another very important and necessary amendment to the present Texas law, which should by all means be adopted as soon as possible, is the granting of permits to the field agents of our scientific institutions,* and other responsible persons engaged in bird studies, allowing them to procure specimens for this purpose. This would enable the United States Department of Agriculture through the Biological Survey to continue their valuable work and their important investigations of the economic value and use of wild birds and animals in this State, and their relations to our agricultural, horticultural and livestock industries. All model game and bird laws grant these permits under proper restrictions, and a number of good reasons can be given why it is desirable to do so.

One other thing that Texas really needs is a live, active association for the protection of birds, with a well organized membership in all parts of the State, powerful and influential enough to send a strong representation to Austin when the legislatures are in session, to look after the interests of the non-game as well as the game birds, and the preservation of all other useful wild life; and for the purpose of assisting and co-operating with professional sportsmen in getting reasonable laws enacted and amendments adopted with this object in view. Whenever State legislatures meet, representatives of the gun clubs, sportsmen's associations, and the gun and ammunition manufacturers are always on hand to look after their several interests, and it is high time that the interests of vanishing wild life should also be represented on such occasions. Persons who honestly differ

*In reply to a request for a permit to collect birds and eggs for the Museum of the Scientific Society of San Antonio, Mr. Will W. Wood, Game, Fish and Oyster Commissioner, wrote, "In answer to yours * * * I beg to say that the game laws prohibit the catching or taking of birds for any purpose and I am unable to grant you permission requested to get these birds for your Museum."—Editor.

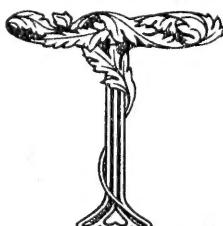


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in their opinions and whose views on game protection do not always coincide, will be much more likely to come to some satisfactory agreement or understanding in friendly consultation, than through newspaper controversies, which often include more or less undeserved abuse and ridicule, unkind insinuations, unfair criticism and bitter sarcasm.

In conclusion, I will say that one of the reasons why I am a strong advocate of the preservation of fish and game is because I am fond of fishing and hunting, but the main reason why I am in favor of bird protection, is because many years experience in Texas as a field naturalist, gave me favorable opportunities for becoming acquainted with the life histories and food habits of many wild creatures and I well know the valuable services many of the species render to mankind and particularly in connection with agriculture and horticulture. Few people realize how enormous is the number of insect pests, or how amazing their power of reproduction, especially among certain species of weevils and plant lice; and few persons realize the importance and value of insect eating birds (now rapidly diminishing in number) in combatting and controlling these pests.

I have no personal interests to serve, no "axe to grind," and I concede the right of any one to disagree with me, but I am absolutely certain that Texas people are making a great mistake in permitting the wanton and reckless destruction of valuable and useful wild life and that the future interests of the State demand that it be put a stop to, before it is too late.



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